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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 8

999 18TH STREET - SUITE 500

DENVER, CO 80202-2466

<http://www.epa.gov/region08>

Ref: EPA-ER

May 10, 2001

Mel and Judy Burnett
Millwork West
Highway 2
Libby, Montana 59923

Dear Mel and Judy;

As you know, recent inspections have revealed the presence of asbestos contaminated vermiculite remaining in the buildings at the Export Plant Site, including the planer building. This is in spite of the previous efforts by contractors of W.R. Grace and Company to decontaminate the buildings, and previous post remediation inspections, and clearance sampling which indicated the buildings had been adequately cleaned. I think that what is happening is that the material has worked itself out of cracks, joints, and interstitial spaces due to the vibrations caused by the nearby railroad tracks and Highway 37, as well as by general weather induced changes over the winter. For the long term the Agency is working with W.R. Grace and the City of Libby to work out an acceptable final disposition for the buildings. This will likely include a more aggressive cleaning and/or a dismantling of the buildings.

However, I also realize that Millwork West has some needs in the short term, specifically that a planer run had been scheduled to begin today, and last for approximately seven days. I appreciate that you have taken steps to delay this run to allow the EPA to abate this problem. As you have expressed to us, the Agency shares your concern for the health and safety of you, your employees, and your customers, and we are most grateful that you have placed these concerns ahead of your financial and scheduling losses.

On May 9, 2001, I directed EPA contractors to removal all visible vermiculite and dust from the planer building. This was followed with a complete HEPA vacuuming of the interior of the building. Subsequently, we conducted clearance sampling on May 9, and again earlier today. With both sampling events, no airborne asbestos fibers were found. At this time I believe there is no threat of asbestos exposure inside the planer building, and I think there would be no asbestos risk to you and your employees in conducting a planer run this week. Nonetheless, I am concerned over a longer period that we might see a similar phenomenon that occurred over this past winter. To help ensure that you, your employees, and customers are not exposed to asbestos over the next week, I would like to continue conducting air sampling and visual inspections during the duration of the planer run. I will clear space in my on-site laboratory to turn around



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same day data analysis using both phase contrast, and transmission electron microscopy. As we have discussed, a meeting has been set for next week to discuss and work out a permanent solution to these issues. Thank you again for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please call either me, or Duc Nuygen at (406) 293-6194.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Peronard', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Paul R. Peronard
On Scene Coordinator
Libby Asbestos Site